

Not Just A River In Egypt by [letitbeme](#)

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Summary: Ted Wheeler thinks his son is in love with that Hopper girl. Karen thinks he's crazy but she has a serious lesson she needs to learn about denial. There isn't a character tab for either of Mike's parents, just thought I'd mention that.

Not Just A River In Egypt

"You look a little stressed out, Karen." Ted Wheeler said to his wife who was standing vigil at the kitchen window supposedly washing dishes even though she hadn't touched one for almost five minutes, while he sat at the table reading the paper.

Karen finally turned around, "It's Mike, he's out on yet another date with that Hopper girl."

"Well, they've been together for three years, I should hope he's out with her."

"Ted!" Karen said sitting down at the table, "I don't like him out at all hours with her. I can't put my finger on why but...I don't like that girl."

Ted wasn't sure which way he should go with this.

"First of all, all hours? It's eight. You told him to be home by nine. And second, I reiterate, three years, Karen, you're just now realizing how much Mike loves her?"

"Ted, stop! Mike's not in love with her! He's too young!"

Ted was about to answer, but he heard the car pull up in the driveway.

"Ah, speak of the devil. How about we ask him and see for ourselves?"

"Fine, you'll see how wrong you are."

Mike came in the front door, and into the kitchen and Ted could tell from the smile that the boy was practically on cloud nine.

"Hey, Mom" Mike said pulling her into a hug and kissing her on the cheek, "Hey, Dad" he said lightly patting him on the shoulder.

Ted spoke up, "Hey, son, I take it you had a good time on your date?"

"Oh, Dad, you have no idea. Tell me something, when you two were going out, did you ever just...not even have to really be doing anything to enjoy each other's company? Like tonight, we went to the movies, we didn't have to be doing anything, saying anything, just sitting there holding each other, watching the screen and...and that was all you needed?"

Ted smiled and said "That's a special feeling, son."

"Tell me about it."

Ted set down his paper, "So, you're really serious about that girl?"

"Oh, you know it."

"You in love with her?"

Mike leaned his head back and started to think, "Well, let's see, we say it to each other at the end of every date, at the end of every phone call, on average, four or five times during each date, a buttload of times at school each day, I'd say we average saying those words about...carry the four...200...250 times per week, give or take. So, yeah, I'd definitely say I love her and she loves me."

Ted got a smug grin, "Told you so, Karen." before turning back to his paper.

Mike didn't notice the angry look on his mother's face and started to chuckle.

"Oh, you guys were talking about me? Surprised my ears weren't burning."

Karen finally stood up and yelled, "Michael Theodore Wheeler!"

Mike was confused and nervous, "What? What did I do?"

"You-you can't be in love! You're too young!"

"Not smarting off here or anything, Mom, but, I'm sixteen, how is that too young?"

Karen was clearly having trouble finding words, "Well-well, for one thing, you barely know what love actually is!"

"A feeling of euphoria whenever you see them, uh, an uncontrollable smile whenever you so much as think of them, an almost obsessive need to do whatever it takes to make them happy, and the impossible yet burning desire to spend every second of every day of forever with them?"

"Sounds pretty dead on, Karen" Ted interjected.

"Stay out of this, Ted! Michael, I don't like your tone, you are grounded! That means no telephone, no TV, no video games, no super-comm, no friends coming over, and most important, no dates with your "girlfriend!" Karen even did air quotes on the word "girlfriend."

Mike had moved to a mix of confused and upset, "Mom...what...what did I do?"

"Don't talk to me that way! Now, go upstairs and do your homework!"

"I did it when I got home from school!"

"Then go get it! I want to see it!"

Mike was at an absolute loss for words and angrily walked out of the kitchen and up the stairs. Ted, who had been watching the conversation, set his paper back down and looked at his wife.

"Okay, who are you and what have you done with the real Karen?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You snap at the boy and ground him when he really didn't do anything. What's going on?"

"Oh, so you're taking his side in this? That's just typical of you, Ted. Well, you know what? I'm not done yet, I know what I'm gonna do." she said getting up and walking to the other side of the kitchen.

"What are you doing?" Ted asked nervously as he was turning around

Karen was dialing the phone and holding it to her ear, "I am going to call Jim Hopper and tell him that his daughter is not allowed to see our son anymore!"

Ted immediately bolted up, "No, no, Karen! That is a very bad idea!" Ted managed to wrestle the phone away from her just as he heard the other line say, "Hello, Hopper residence."

"Sorry, wrong number." Ted quickly said before hanging up the phone and turning back to his wife.

"Okay, that's it, what the hell is going on with you tonight, Karen?"

"Ted, that girl is a bad influence, Mike has had a really bad attitude lately and I know it's because of her! And I want my boy back, dammit!"

And then it all made sense for Ted.

"Oh, I get it now." he said softly.

"Get what?"

"Honey,...sit down." Ted said leading her back to the table and the seats they'd been in before.

"Karen, you're not mad about Mike or Jane or anything like that. You're just realizing how much Mike has grown up and you couldn't handle it."

"What are you talking about?"

"You still see him as your little boy, but him having a girlfriend, going on dates, and even being in love, it was just too much for you and you lost it."

"Oh, Ted, don't be ridiculous!"

Ted's patience was officially gone now, "Oh, really? I'm the ridiculous one? Okay, let me just give you a little recap of this evening so far, our son comes home from his date in an insanely good mood, which has been happening a lot recently. Have you noticed that,

Karen? The boy's always in a good mood lately, especially after he's been with her, so I don't know where you're getting this bad attitude tripe! He tells us a practically diabetic account of a simple movie date, proving how happy he is with her. I ask if he's in love, he says as much, and YOU lose it on him! YOU say he's too young to feel that way, and after he gives a pretty damn accurate account of being in love, YOU ground him for it! And to top off this night of insanity, YOU take all of two seconds to decide she must be a bad influence for the non-existent "bad behavior" and decide to pull them apart for good! And, by the way, Karen, if you'd gotten to know Jane at all, you'd know what a sweet, polite almost too-good-for-this-world girl she is! Now, tell me, Karen, who in that situation do you think is the ridiculous one?!"

Karen didn't answer, she just sat there absorbing everything he said.

"That's what I thought." Ted said before leaving the room.

Karen still sat there, so lost in thought, she didn't even hear Mike walk up behind her until he cleared his throat.

"Oh!"

"Here's my homework." Mike mumbled handing her some papers, still angry but not wanting to make things worse.

"Oh, yes" Karen said looking them over, "This is your math homework?"

"Yes, we're learning about sines and cosines."

"I see" she said, flipping through the papers, "and this is your english homework?"

"Yes, we're reading this book, we were supposed to read chapters 5 and 6 and write a brief summary, I have the book here if you want to look it over," Mike said holding a copy of *Anthem* by Ayn Rand.

"No, Mike, that's fine. You said you did this when you got home?"

"Yeah, since it was our date night, El told me to do it then and then I wouldn't have to rush it out tonight."

"Oh, it was her idea?"

"Yeah, that's right."

"Well, all this seems to be in order" Karen said handing everything back over to Mike.

"Good, now if it's all right with you, I'm going to go to bed." Mike said turning around.

Karen sat for a second and couldn't take it anymore, "Mike!" she said before turning around.

He stopped and turned to face her, thinking he was in even more trouble, "What?"

Karen walked over and stooped down to his level with her hands on his shoulders, "I'm...so sorry, Michael, I keep forgetting what a man you're growing up into and I see you with your girlfriend, going on dates, and saying you're in love and...and I just couldn't take it!" she said starting to cry and wrap her arms around him resting her head on his shoulder, "I'm just realizing you're not my little boy anymore, Michael."

Mike wrapped his arms around her and lightly comforted her, "Oh, Mom..." he said, actually understanding everything she said, "You know...no matter what...even if I'm not little anymore...I promise I'm always gonna be your boy."

Karen pulled away wiping tears away and looked him in the face, "Thank you, Michael."

Mike smiled and said, "You're welcome, Mom, and I'm sorry, too."

"You...didn't do anything wrong, Mike."

"I know, but, it felt like the right thing to say." chuckling a little and getting a laugh out of Karen as well.

Mike decided to push his luck, "So, now, does this mean..."

Karen laughed again, knowing where this was going, "You're not

grounded, Michael."

Now, Mike was ecstatic, "Thanks, Mom, you're great!" he said, kissing her on the cheek again.

"Actually, Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"I...I was just realizing...I don't actually know Jane very well, maybe you could invite her over for dinner tomorrow night and I could finally talk to the girl that stole my boy's heart so effectively."

"Great idea, Mom! I'll go call her now and see when she's free!" Mike said running towards the stairs.

Karen walked back into the kitchen, sat down in the same chair yet again and smiled.

She whispered to herself, "He's such a good boy...and I bet she's a great girl, too."